

Mr. Chairman, I think the amendment is about women's health. I believe that. I believe it is also about fairness. The amendment also, and this has been repeated over and over again, it does not allow taxpayer-funded abortions at military hospitals, nor does it compel any doctor who opposes abortion on principle or as a matter of conscience to perform an abortion. It reinstates the policy we had before.

Finally, please know the amendment has the strong support of health care providers, organizations like the American Nurses Association, American Public Health Association, Medical Women's Association and the College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The litany goes on. These are medical people who know.

Please support the amendment.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY).

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Sanchez amendment. Only in a Republican Congress can a woman sign up to serve her country and have her rights denied in return. While a female soldier is busy defending her country overseas, her country in this Congress is working to take away her rights.

If a male member of the armed services needs medical attention overseas, he receives the best. If a female member of the armed services needs a specific medical procedure, she is forced to either wait until she can travel to the United States or go to a foreign hospital, which may be unsanitary and dangerous.

This bill will cost the American taxpayer nothing. Each woman will pick up her own tab. All she wants is the right to do it.

Women have waited long enough to receive equal treatment in the military. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will vote for this amendment, and give these most deserving soldiers back what is rightfully theirs.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 30 seconds to respond.

Mr. Chairman, it is quite disappointing for the gentlewoman who just spoke to talk about a Republican Congress denying.

Let me just state this: The purpose of the military is to fight and win the Nation's wars. The gentlewoman's comments also impugn the dignity of Democrats who are pro-life advocates, those whose passion is about saving life, not taking the life of the innocent unborn child, as she is walking off the floor and does not want to hear this debate. I am speaking directly to you.

There are Members of both sides of this aisle that speak passionately about saving the life of the unborn. For you to try to rein in politics is completely unnecessary.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Chairman, I yield 10 seconds to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) to respond.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, this is a constitutional

right, a right that is legal in the United States. You are depriving a woman who is defending her country, putting her life on the line to defend her country. You are taking away a right that men have. It is a right that she would have if she were in her own country. I think it is outrageous. It is wrong. Everyone should vote against this amendment.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Chairman, I yield the balance of my time to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY).

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlewoman from New York is recognized for 50 seconds.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Sanchez-Morella-Lowe amendment, and I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ) and my colleagues for their important work on this issue.

In closing, I just want to say, please do not be fooled. This is not an issue of taxpayer dollars funding abortion. This is about American women in private with their own money exercising their constitutional right to choose.

Over 100,000 women live on American military bases. These women work to protect the freedom of our country. These women risk their lives and security to protect our great and powerful Nation. These women for the past 4 years have been denied the right to a safe and legal abortion at the bases where they are stationed.

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Just yesterday, when we debated the anti-choice majority's latest effort to restrict access to legal abortion, I said I was tired of these attempts to chip away at a woman's right to choose. I ask my colleagues to please support the Sanchez-Morella-Lowe amendment.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Chairman, I yield the balance of the time to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) to close in opposition to the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK).

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 3 minutes to close.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise in very strong opposition to this amendment. I would encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote against this amendment.

I bring a somewhat unique perspective to this debate in that not only prior to coming to the Congress did I practice medicine, but for many years prior to coming to the Congress I practiced medicine in the military. I was actually in the Army Medical Corps at the time when pro-life President Ronald Reagan passed an order that said we were not going to have abortions in military hospitals anymore.

It was very interesting for me at the time, I was a medical resident, to see the reaction to that order. It was sort of a sigh of relief. Everybody that I spoke to, the doctors and nurses, were very pleased that they were going to

take that very, very controversial issue and move it out of the military hospitals.

Some people have been arguing that this is a constitutional right. There is no constitutional right to have an abortion in a military hospital. Indeed, the reason all of those doctors and nurses, even many of whom considered themselves to be "pro-choice", liked getting it out is because they did not like to have anything to do with it.

It is one of the most fascinating things to me, when I talk with my medical colleagues, many of whom say, you know, I am pro-choice, but they always follow it with this. They say, I would never perform an abortion, I would never assist in an abortion. The reason why they say that is they know exactly what an abortion is. It is the taking of an innocent human life. It has a beating heart. It has brain waves. Those are the things that I used to use to make a determination as to whether or not somebody was dead.

This is a very, very controversial issue. Even if Members do stand on the pro-abortion side of this issue, Members have to acknowledge that it is so incredibly controversial within the population in general that this would be something that we would be well served as a Congress to keep outside of Federal facilities, outside of Federal hospitals.

To say that the women will pay for the abortion, we all know that that issue is just part of the story. Having that infrastructure, having those medical professionals there, it represents a certain amount of Federal support.

For the millions and millions of pro-life Americans, I think certainly if Members are pro-life, they should vote against this amendment. I think if Members are undecided, they should vote against this amendment.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I strongly support the amendment, which will restore regulations permitting abortions for service members and their dependents at overseas defense department medical facilities.

Without this amendment women who have volunteered to serve their country will continue to be discriminated against by prohibiting them from exercising their legally protected right to choose abortion simply because they are stationed overseas.

While the department of defense policy respects the laws of host nations regarding abortions, service women stationed overseas should be entitled to the same services, as do women stationed in the U.S.

Prohibiting women from using their own funds to obtain abortion services at overseas military facilities endangers women's health.

Women stationed overseas depend on their base hospitals for medical care, and are often situated in areas where local facilities are inadequate or unavailable. This policy may cause a woman facing a crisis pregnancy to seek out an illegal and potentially unsafe abortion.

Since 1996, the ban on DOD abortions was made permanent by the DOD authorization bill. I have fought to restore the female service member's constitutional right of choice.